

Fur flies as Christmas sales take off - Mark Townsend

LEVEL THREE - ADVANCED

Pre-reading activities

1 Fur as fashion. What do you know about it?

Decide whether these statements are TRUE or FALSE. Then look in the text to check your answers:

1. Fur sales have been falling consistently since the early 1980s.
2. Fur sales have just started to rise again.
3. In London fur has not been so visible on the high street for 20 years.
4. People buying fur are rebelling against the political correctness of the 1990s.
5. Jennifer Lopez, Madonna and Kate Moss have all spoken out against wearing fur.
6. People in their 40s and 50s have opened up a new market for fur.
7. In the mid-90s about 90% of fur shops were forced to close.
8. According to protest groups, one coat can mean the death of more than 50 animals.

2 Key Vocabulary

The following are all key words from the text. Use them to fill the gaps in the sentences:

taboo furrier resurgence to bolster catwalk
lobby to clutch limelight a far cry gripping

1. A _____ is a group of people who try to influence politicians on a particular issue.
2. The verb _____ means to improve something or to make it stronger.
3. If you are in the _____, you are at the centre of attention.
4. An image that captures your attention can be described as _____.
5. A _____ is someone who sells clothes made from fur.
6. A _____ subject is one that people find offensive or embarrassing.
7. If you _____ something, you hold it very tightly.
8. Models wearing newly designed clothes usually walk along a _____.
9. If something experiences a _____, it returns to its previous position and grows further.
10. If something is _____ from something else, it is very different from it.

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LEVEL ONE - ELEMENTARY
LEVEL THREE - ADVANCED

Fur flies as Christmas sales take off

by Mark Townsend

Britain's fur trade is enjoying its strongest growth for 20 years, suggesting a dramatic softening of public attitudes towards wearing animal skins. Widespread hostility to wearing fur in the 1990s made it fashion's biggest taboo for most image-conscious consumers. Yet new industry figures have revealed that sales rose 35% in the UK last year - the biggest single increase since the early 80s.

Demand has been so acute that some furriers have already sold out of stock, weeks before the Christmas shopping reaches its peak. In London fur has not been so highly visible on the high street for 20 years. Even last month's gripping image of pop singer Sophie Ellis Bextor

clutching a skinned fox to register her disgust at the trade will fail to quash fur's resurgence, according to retailers. They believe that its sudden popularity is partly fuelled by a new generation of consumers who are rebelling against the anti-fur movement and the political correctness of the 90s.

The heavy promotion of mink and fox by

leading fashion houses is also credited with bolstering its appeal: fur has registered 300 appearances on the catwalks so far this year. Celebrities such as Jennifer Lopez, Madonna, P Diddy, and the model Kate Moss are among those who have offered fur the celebrity badge of approval. This is a far cry from the days when fur-coat wearers risked being spattered with paint in public while the world's supermodels declared they would "rather go naked" than wear animal skins.

Fashion historian Judith Watt, who specialises in the history of fur, believes that is the twenty and thirty-something women who have opened up a new market for fur. "A generation that grew up as children of the anti-fur movement are now rebelling against it", she says. "They are bored with being politically correct. It doesn't mean they haven't got a conscience; they just want to make up their own minds.

At the height of the successful protests from the anti-fur lobby in the mid-90s, an estimated 90% of shops were forced to close. Yet despite fur's growing acceptance, the decision of 23-year-old

Bextor to pose for the animal welfare charity People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (Peta), indicates that hostility towards the trade remains. Following the publication of her clutching the bloody remnants of a fox last month, Peta received more than 50,000 hits on its website within three days. The organisation accused the fur trade of widespread cruelty, claiming that just one coat can require killing as many as 50 animals by various means, including electrocution, poisoning or gassing. "What the fur industry wants to hide is the cruelty; Sophie's picture brings home the reality," says Dawn Carr, who is the director of Peta. "Cruelty is never going to be back in fashion."

Last month the organisation was also in the limelight when a group of Peta activists targeted the fur industry's latest high-profile recruit, the supermodel Gisele Bundchen, at a New York fashion show. They were furious over Bundchen's decision to spearhead an advertising campaign for leading US fur company Blackglama in exchange for a reported \$500,000 and two black mink coats.

The Guardian Weekly 5-12-2002, page 22

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3 Comprehension check. Which of the answers given best reflects the meaning of the text?

1. The sudden popularity of fur is due to:

- a. the support of people like Madonna and Jennifer Lopez.
- b. a new generation of consumers rebelling against political correctness.
- c. the anti-fur movement.

2. Another factor in the increase in the appeal of fur is:

- a. the fact that fur-coat wearers no longer risk being spattered with paint.
- b. it is cheaper than it used to be.
- c. the fact that leading fashion houses are promoting fur.

3. According to the fashion historian, who has opened up the new market for fur?

- a. people born in the 1920s and 1930s.
- b. people in their twenties and thirties.
- c. People who are politically correct.

4. What does Peta believe in?

- a. the humane treatment of animals.
- b. ethically produced fur.
- c. hostility towards the fur trade.

5. Why has Gisele Bundchen been criticised?

- a. because she models fur coats.
- b. because she accepted a lot of money and two mink coats to lead an advertising campaign.
- c. because she is a high-profile model.

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4 Vocabulary work – Collocations 1

Without looking back at the text, fill the gaps in these sentences. Then look back in the text and check your answers:

1. Her fur coat was _____ paint.
2. Christmas shopping _____ a peak in the middle of December.
3. Many people are _____ against the anti-fur movement.
4. Fashion houses are trying to _____ the appeal of fur.
5. Younger women have _____ a new market for fur.
6. The fur industry has been _____ widespread cruelty.
7. The picture of the model with the skinned fox _____ home the reality.
8. Gisele Bundchen agreed to _____ an advertising campaign.

5 Reformulation

Match the beginnings with the endings:

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. Public attitudes towards the wearing of animal skins ... | a. ... will probably fail to prevent the recovery in the sale of fur. |
| 2. Some furriers are already out of stock ... | b. ... to wearing animal skins. |
| 3. The gripping image of the pop singer holding the skinned fox ... | c. ... requires the killing of as many as 50 animals. |
| 4. The sudden popularity of fur ... | d. ... appear to be softening. |
| 5. In the 1990s many supermodels declared they would prefer being naked ... | e. ... appears to be the result of people rebelling against the political correctness of the 1990s. |
| 6. About 90% of fur shops had to close ... | f. ... as a result of protests by the anti-fur lobby. |
| 7. Peta claims that the production of a single coat ... | g. ... provoked a furious response from Peta activists. |
| 8. Gisele Bundchen's actions ... | h. ... as a result of exceptionally high demand. |

6 Discussion

Do you think that people should wear fur?

Make a list of the arguments for and against the fur trade.

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KEY

True or False

1 F; 2 T; 3 T; 4 T; 5 F; 6 F; 7 T; 8 F

Key Vocabulary

1. lobby
2. to bolster
3. limelight
4. gripping
5. furrier
6. taboo
7. clutch
8. catwalk
9. resurgence
10. a far cry

Collocations

1. spattered with
2. reaches
3. rebelling
4. bolster
5. opened up
6. accused of
7. brings
8. spearhead

Reformulation

1 d; 2 h; 3 a; 4 e; 5 b; 6 f; 7 c; 8 g

Comprehension check

1 b; 2 c; 3 b; 4 a; 5 b